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## Disposition and Repurchase Intention: A Preliminary Study of the How and Why

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### Abstract

This study is groundwork to look into disposal behaviours in Malaysia. Despite the importance of sustainable waste management, most studies are carried out in the West and developed countries with limited relevance to developing countries in eastern context. Moreover, there is an extreme lack of knowledge pertaining to specific disposal behaviours from marketing perspective. Hence, little is known about the relationship between consumer behaviour and disposal behaviours. The present study specifically looked into the relationship between disposal behaviours and repurchase intention towards five products of two categories, namely toothbrush and textbook which are regarded as convenience products, and handphone, laptop and bicycle, which belong to shopping products. A quantitative approach was utilized where 700 copies of self-administered questionnaire were distributed at a public university in Malaysia. Five hundred usable copies were subsequently collected in one month. Data was then analyzed using descriptive and regression analysis. The findings show that consumers have different disposal behaviours towards different types of products, and such behaviours have positive effect on repurchase intention. However, inconsistent results in disposal behaviours were also observed between products in the same categories. While consumers would most likely throw away a toothbrush to get rid of it permanently, they would keep textbooks or sell them. Although they are most inclined to keep a handphone, a laptop and a bicycle, they would also dispose them by means of giving away, trading, selling and renting. In relation to purchase intention, disposing of the product permanently is found to have stronger effect than disposing of it temporarily and keeping it. Notwithstanding a pilot study, it highlights the implication of consumer behaviour in disposing different types and categories of products. What is disposed and why from marketing standpoint provide insights into pre- and post-behaviours, thus articulating motivations to dispose and future behaviours. Managerial implications are provided in relation to management, marketing, and service operations.

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## 1. Introduction

It is well documented that consumer behaviour builds on three salient activities: acquisition, usage and disposition (Jacoby, 1978). The term disposition in the consumer research domain made its headlines in the late 70s when it was asserted that people who engage in value-based approaches on products, such as searching for information and evaluating them, would also focus on decisions on how and when to dispose (Jacoby, Berning & Dietvorst, 1977). Moreover, the understanding of disposition behaviour can provide further insights into post-purchase behaviour (Jacoby et al., 1977; Lin & Chang, 2013). As purchase and consumption behaviour are cyclical in nature, it generates economic activities and demand in the marketplace. It then propels more material acquisition and conspicuous consumption. As such, disposition behaviour is also pivotal to societal well-being and environmental sustainability (Palmer & Walls, 1998).

Notwithstanding the importance of understanding disposition behaviour, the extant of literature on consumer behaviour mainly focuses on topics related to acquisition and consumption. Therefore, less attention is given to understanding disposition behaviour, and how it ties in with repurchase intention (Raghavan, 2010). As past studies on disposition are predominantly done in developed countries (Coulter & Ligas, 2003; Lin & Chang, 2013; Wilhelm, Yankov, & Magee, 2011; Young Lee, Halter, Johnson, & Ju, 2013), little is known about the subject matter in developing economies. Hence, the present study serves as a preliminary attempt to determine the relationship between disposition behaviour and repurchase intention among Malaysian university students. Disposition decision taxonomy by Jacoby et al. (1977) is adopted to specify various disposition behaviours. Instead of looking at disposition in a general manner, five specific products are selected for investigation, and they are textbook, hand phone, bicycle, laptop and toothbrush. As they are either convenience or shopping products, they are ubiquitous and essential among students. It is hoped that such groundwork study and its expected contributions would become a precursor to future efforts to explore and explain disposition behaviour in a more holistic manner.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Disposition decisions

Accompanying the increasing importance of consumption and usage activities, the matter of disposition has begun to evoke greater attention. Jacoby et al. (1977) has articulately proposed a conceptual model to specify the types of disposition behaviour that are available for consumers to choose from, as shown in Figure 1. How consumers dispose and why vary across different products. Nevertheless, these disposition decisions can be categorized as: keeping it, getting rid of it permanently and getting rid of it temporarily. Generally, consumers are reluctant to relinquish their possessions in a timely fashion. The relationship between consumers and their possessions has a significant impact on their disposal choices (Jacoby et al., 1977). This is consistent with the latter works by Coulter and Ligas (2003) as they term the two groups of individuals as Packrats and Purgers. While Packrats are consumers who have difficulty in disposing of their possessions and will more likely keep them even if the items no longer hold value, Purgers are the opposite of packrats as they are willing to dispose of items if not needed or when those items are rendered useless.

Past studies have also looked into several mitigating factors, incorporating demographic, social and economic aspects to better understand disposition issues (Coulter & Ligas, 2003; Harrell & McConocha, 1992). In particular, it is claimed that disposition rationales are directly linked to economic circumstances which include income level, propensity to save and current interest rates (Furajji, Łatuszyńska & Wawrzyniak, 2012). It is suggested that disposition behaviour of higher income earners have the tendencies to keep or get rid of the product permanently and consider repurchasing again (Palmer & Walls, 1998). It is also found that perceptions of obsolescence lead individuals to discard the product (Cooper, 2004). Alternatively, the study done by Hanson (1980), in turn, shows that disposition process can be categorized into intrinsic factors, such as product condition and value, and extrinsic factors, such as urgency and change of trend. The rationale behind these distinctions is that consumers tend to keep the items for secondary use or to sell or pass it to someone later. Such disposition process is found to be dependent on psychological motivators, such as personality and attitude (Welfens, Nordmann, Seibt, & Schmitt, 2013; Conn, & Warren, 1979). Hence, it can be concluded that disposition behaviour is not just about the nature and condition of

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